

MR. A. M. SMITH, PORTLAND, MAINE.---DEALER.

Interviewed by Richard Rathbun, Nov. 23, 1893

-----

Has been in the fish business about 15 years.

In regard to mackerel fishery, does not think there is practically any legislation that can be enacted in regard to catching mackerel but what would be entirely useless. He used to be a strong believer in legislation. Never engaged personally in the fisheries.

In regard to the five years close season, he was the instigator of that. He was the first one that moved in that direction. Had an idea that there might possibly be something in it, with relation to the movements of the mackerel on our own coast; but his principal reason for going into it was a selfish one. The position he took at that time, and which he can prove by facts, was this: that so far

as vessel owners were concerned, there was no money in catching mackerel before that time which we designated the close season had expired, for the reason that our vessels would go south at a heavy expense; they would run their mackerel into New York, where they would overstock the market, the price would run right down from a reasonable price to an unprofitable one, and it took us almost all the rest of the season to bring the price back again where it should be. That was the principal reason he had in inaugurating that movement in favor of a close season. But the effect it had on mackereling, as we all can see from the results, was non-effective. It did not make any difference. As far as trade is concerned, we can hardly judge because there has been so few mackerel lately in the market. Does not think there is any difference in the trade.

If I remember, the inauguration of that

law developed a tremendous industry in pound fishing all along the shore from New Jersey to the uttermost end of Nova Scotia. That stimulated the pounds around Yarmouth. Where there was one pound in the States and along the Nova Scotia shore before that time, when that law was passed I think it doubled it up immediately that year. My theory in regard to that is, that those pounds during the spawning season do more damage to mackerel fishing than all the seines that ever were used, because those fish generally go into the shallow water to spawn. But so far as that close law being a benefit, it was a misfortune.

Thinks either State or National legislation entirely useless so far as the mackerel fishery is concerned. If they want to exclude the seine, I would hold up both hands to do it. I would be perfectly willing that they should exclude the seines, but I should want to do it on economical grounds rather than on the ground

of preservation of the fisheries. It costs us a great deal more to fit out vessels for seining than by the old-fashioned way of hooking, and by the old-fashioned way more persons were given employment. Not that one vessel would take any more men, but it required a great many more vessels to carry on the industry. Does not think it would be advisable, however, to give up the purse seine fishing.

There may be some inland fish that need protection, like salmon and lobsters, and something like that.

Most all the legislation that has ever been made in the state of Maine in regard to catching fish has been in the interest of some particular person or interest that is especially working in that line. I will say that without fear of contradiction from any intelligent man.

There has been no decrease in the quantity of mackerel. They have been as plenty on our



shores this year as I have ever known them to be, all the way from Block Island to the Bay of Fundy. This legislation is not asked for in behalf of the general good at all. It is all for some selfish interest.

I think the existing regulations ought to be changed. I think it is exceedingly unjust for the Nova Scotia Government, or our own Government, to confiscate a vessel or her gear for the wrongdoing of men who are absolutely out of the control of the owner of the vessel. The captain, not the owner, should be held responsible.

On the coast of Maine purse seining is not allowed within the headlines that are 3 miles apart or less. The last legislature helped us out a little in drawing the line up the Bay, but that only goes as far as St. Johns Bay. That law was passed last winter.

-----

CAPTAIN N. ORCHARD, PORTLAND, ME.--INTERVIEWED BY  
RICHARD RATHBUN, NOVEMBER 23, 1893.

Capt. N. Orchard, of the Sch. "George W. Pierce"  
of Portland. Has been in the mackerel business for  
about 35 years. Lives in Booth Bay.

There seems to be more mackerel this year than  
there were last, but were harder to catch. Has  
been a series of bad years back to about 1885.  
Does not think they were any scarcer, as a whole,  
than in previous years. Thinks the purse seine has  
some effect. If there had never been a purse seine  
there would be any quantity of them now. Would not  
make much difference to him whether the purse seine  
were given up or not. Thinks the close season did  
some good. Thinks it would be a good thing to  
continue it. They ought not to go south and catch  
these unspawned fish. About all the mackerel they  
catch here (Portland vessels) are on the Cape Shore,  
and the close season gives them a chance to get  
along, as otherwise lots of them would be caught as  
they pass along. During the close season they did  
not get them and they had a chance to spawn. Every  
spring they follow them from the south to the Jersey

shore, and they have a good chance to catch a good many of them.

W. S. JORDAN & CO., PORTLAND, ME., INTERVIEWED BY  
RICHARD RATHBUN, NOVEMBER 23, 1893.

Does not think the purse seine has any effect on the mackerel; that is, as to the diminution of the fish. It is like this: There are so many other fish of all kinds preying upon the mackerel, and so many other influences of all kinds, that the use of the purse seine has not diminished the number of mackerel. The large decrease in the catch for a number of years is not owing to the use of the purse seine for this reason: Purse seines have been used for years and years, and in 1884 the catch was large, and the next year the catch dropped off almost to nothing. That diminution cannot be laid to the use of the purse seines. Thinks the close season was a benefit to the owners of vessels, and to some extent a benefit to the trade. Does not think the purse seine fishery needs any regulation. The purse seine fishing does not affect the inshore fishery here. The gill-net fishermen have not been doing as much of late for the reason that there are not as many mackerel on the coast, but does not think it is owing to seining at all. It



would be better to give up the southern fishery entirely. Last year sent two vessels, against our judgment, because the captains were bound to go. Used to make large catches in the old days with hook and line. Had a few vessels down at Block Island last summer; all had purse seines, and all the vessels took hooks and lines.

Is quite confident that the diminution of the catch of mackerel is not in any way due to the purse seines. It is from other causes, such as other fish preying upon them, etc., etc.

CAPTAIN ALMON MALLOCH, PORTLAND, ME.--INTERVIEWED BY  
RICHARD RATHBUN, NOVEMBER 23, 1893.

Captain of Sch. "Nathan Cleaves" Has had  
about 15 years experience mackerel fishing.

Thinks there was a decrease in the quantity of  
mackerel from 1885 until 1890, but there has been  
an increase since then. Their decrease heretofore  
was all owing to the amount of blue-fish which in-  
habit this coast and which feed on mackerel(See un-  
der Enemies). Thinks blue-fish are very destruc-  
tive to mackerel. They have a tendency to drive  
mackerel off this coast to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.  
Does not think squid frighten them very much. Has  
seen mackerel and squid school together. Albacore  
drive them very much. Mackerel seem to know when  
these enemies are after them, and they travel to  
get out of the way. Sometimes has known them to go  
200 or 300 miles. Sometimes way up in the Bay of  
Fundy where blue-fish do not go. Does not think  
whales have much effect. They feed on them some,  
but are not very destructive. Dog-fish feed on  
them some, but mackerel and dog-fish will school  
together. Blue-fish and albacore are the most de-  
structive fish to mackerel.

Thinks the five years close season has been the ruination of the business along the Massachusetts and Maine coast. He would not have any close season for mackerel. Catch them when you can. Will never catch them all out; it is useless to think of it. Does not think we catch  $\frac{1}{16}$  part with seines or hooks that are destroyed by fishes that feed on them. Would not suggest any regulations for the mackerel fishery. Thinks it will regulate itself.

He went south this year, but did not get many fish. Only one or two vessels that did.

When you interfere with us here you are going to benefit other countries that are going to use our markets. Such other countries are Ireland, Norway, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Canada. Any quantity of mackerel come in from Ireland and Norway. Cannot say just how much, but it increases every year. Does not take a very large quantity of mackerel to put prices down on extra fish. Those fish that come from Norway are best quality, No. 1. Would not be apt to send anything else.

The schools that appear on the southern coast first are moving in a northeasterly direction, up

along the edge of soundings. Find them off shore anywheres from 20 to 75 miles; and that would bring it about on the edge of the Gulf Stream. None of the first run of fish stop at Block Island. They go over Georges, over the southern and some over the northern edge, and strike along about Cape Sable, and pass down the Cape Shore into North Bay. Thinks it is a later school that comes in at Block Island, and they practically remain there during the season. Some will not strike until they get well down the coast of Nova Scotia, as far as Beaver Harbor. Schools have been known to strike in at Louisburg that come straight from off shore. They come in over Western Bank from the Gulf Stream region, and enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence, passing along the outer coast of the Cape Shore.

The mackerel strike the Cape Shore about the 26th or 27th of May, and they make about 40 miles a day. The length of the Nova Scotia coast and Cape Breton is 290 miles. The farther east they strike the less time it takes for them to reach the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The first schools are generally all large mackerel. They go in around Cape North, and some over towards Newfoundland, passing



along the southern side of Newfoundland and thence in the direction of Iceland. They have been followed beyond Newfoundland as far as you can see the land, and they were heading straight northeast in the open ocean.

The second body consists generally of smaller mixed fish. They are not more than a day or two later in their appearance than the first school. Some of these go through the Gut of Canso.

Then there is what we call the strawberry school. They are smaller than the second school. They work down along the shore very slowly. Some go through the Gut of Canso; some up around Cape North. Sometimes do not go any further than Cape North: stay down around Sidney all summer.

Does not think the big fish school very much. Thinks they go way to the north. The second school does not go so far north. They stay around Prince Edward Island and the Magdalens. Sometimes you will find small fish in the Gulf later than you will see big ones. I was there last fall; got home the 26th, and the last fish we saw there were little ones.

Does not think mackerel grow any in the win-

ter. Those little fish 5 inches long he does not see the next spring.

The fish that go into the Bay of Fundy come from the southward, out around Block Island and Nantucket, <sup>F</sup>through South Channel and up that way. Come on to the coast of Maine generally about the 20th of June, and stay until about the middle of September. Off this coast get large and small fish both.

Thinks that the Gulf of Maine is the best purse seine fishing grounds as a whole, that there is. They school better here than they do in the Gulf or on the southern grounds. The school that came on here suddenly this fall covered an area of 7 or 8 miles wide and 10 miles long. When we first saw them they were off Sequin. They travelled eastward down as far as Monhegan, and seaward right off shore. Saw blue-fish and albacore around Monhegan in immense numbers for two days after the mackerel were there.

Has never taken any mackerel in midwinter. Has heard of their being taken in codfish on Georges. Has heard of their being taken with the herring on the eastern coast of Maine--a very few. Thinks those are mackerel that get separated from the main

bodies and go among the winter herring. They followed a school of mackerel up into the Gulf of St. Lawrence 3 years ago--the 27th of May. Has never seen them with ice around.

Mackerel feed mostly on what we call red feed, cayenne. Has seen them feed upon their own young in the Gulf of St. Lawrence this summer.

Mackerel spawn, we think, in June. Does not think they spawn south, except it is at Block Island; fish that stay there during the season. Thinks some schools spawn after June. The spawning season begins at Block Island along the last part of June and the first of July. They spawn as early in the Gulf of St. Lawrence as they do here. Does not think they keep on the surface when they spawn. Thinks they spawn on the bottom. There are two or three weeks that we do not find them when they are spawning. Does not know just how long they stay down.

CAPT. JAMES ELLSWORTH, PORTLAND, ME.--INTERVIEWED BY  
RICHARD RATHBUN, NOVEMBER 23, 1893.

Goes in different vessels. Owns and charters vessels. This year went in the "Lillie B. Fernald". 18 years experience in mackerel fishing.

Does not think mackerel are decreasing at all as a whole. His reasons are that long before there was a purse seine, in hooking times, we had these falling off years every 6 or 7 years. In 1831 there was not a purse seine thought of, and there were almost 500,000 barrels of mackerel landed, and in 1884, our best year, there were about 520,000 barrels; about 20,000 barrels more.

The mackerel, in his opinion, after they grow to be No. 1's, that is, large size, do not school, except at very rare times. Will see by the records that the years of the largest catch was the smallest size fish, and in 3 or 4 years they grow to these big mackerel.

Did not see the fish this spring at the south. We started for the Nova Scotia shore, and when we got there, there was a body of mackerel come from the south and struck on the Nova Scotia shore.



Dont know where they go, but suppose they go up to the Straits of Belle Isle and lay on the bottom. Do not see them until they come back in the fall. The later schools that go up the coast are a smaller run of fish. Part of them go through the Gut of Canso, but not to amount to anything. There is only a remnant goes into the Bay Chaleur proper. They may go up on the east coast of Labrador. But the great body of the fish go somewheres where our vessels are not looking for them. The small fish most generally leave the Gulf last. Most always find the small fish on the tail end of the big ones. Might strike the big mackerel off the capes of Delaware, while the small fish might be off the capes of Virginia. The small school that goes into the Gulf last will come out first sometimes. When the small fish go into the Gulf or come on our own coast, they go up into the bays and harbors more than the big ones.

The fish that go up strike the Cape Shore around Liverpool and Halifax. This year they struck to the eastward of Halifax. We got 136 barrels off Liverpool, about 50 or 60 miles eastward of Halifax, this year.

My opinion is that the heft of the fish come from the south, way down in the latitude of the capes of Virginia, off the edge of the Gulf Stream, because we have traced them, ourselves all the way up, and we find they make that passage of about 1,000 miles in about 6 weeks. Sometimes they may stop a day when they strike on the southeast past of Georges. The southern part of Georges may be a good fishing ground at times. They strike the Nova Scotia shore from the 25th to the 30th of May. Then it is some 10 to 15 days before they round Cape North. It takes that body of fish as much as 10 or 15 days from the first time we fall in with them until they all get clear.

The fish that go into the Bay of Fundy sometimes come close in, perhaps 25 or 30 miles off Cape Cod, and other times off eastward of Georges Bank and over Browns Bank, and strike in east of what we call the Seal Islands, and work over toward Mount Desert.

The fish that go around North Cape all go into the Gulf. It is a large school. They are seen clear across on the other side close over on the Straits of Belle Isle.

The fish born last spring will be about 5 inches in length this fall. Sometimes we see them the next spring and sometimes not.

Thinks some schools remain all summer down off the capes of Virginia.

Would not consider it expedient to make any regulations regarding the purse seine fishery. Thinks the fish will regulate themselves. Does not think it would be any use to have a close season. Does not think it amounts to anything; has not benefitted any one. Mackerel will school only just when they feel like it. His experience has extended back to 1875. Never went hook and line fishing. If the purse seines were given up, thinks it would take some time before the fish could be caught in the old way.

Some years fish are wilder than they used to be. When they grow to large size they seem to be very wild; and there are different reasons for making them wild. When there is plenty of cayenne on the surface of the water it benefits schooling; the fish will come on top of the water to school, and feed. When we have a hard year you will not see any of that on the surface. It may be under-

neath the surface, and mackerel will not come up. Thinks it makes the fish tame. Mackerel also feed on shrimp. When they are chasing this feed they are very wild. The <sup>h</sup>shrimp are going every way, and the mackerel are all scattered. Has seen the "all-eyes". Seen them mostly out around Block Island, and also on our own coast of Maine and Massachusetts. They are a little fish, Not a crustacean. Mackerel will eat herring, and will also eat their own young.

Thinks what they(the fishermen) catch does not amount to anything. If these fish stayed year after year it would be a different thing, but it is only a matter of 10 or 15 days that we catch any.

There were vessels 2 or 3 years ago got mackerel off Liverpool. Some got such big schools that they burst their seines. Could see schools just as far as you could see. That was 3 years ago; and there has been different times that mackerel have showed that way.

The law which made the close season originated right through our mackerel dealers, for the reason that vessels would go out and get a trip of poor mackerel, would take them into New York or Philadelphia, and would sell them; and, of course, the more that were landed there hurt the market just



that much, and the men that bought mackerel the fall before to hold them over, it hurt their trade. The majority of the vessel captains here were not in favor of the close season. The object of the law was to regulate the market, not to protect the fish.

Some of the men interested in the fish business here are John Emery, E. C. Willard, the Lord Bros. The Jordans have not had much interest in the fish business except for the last 2 or 3 years. Mr. Whidden and Mr. Smith at one time had the biggest fishing industry out of here. They were the two parties that were interested in getting this law; and the very first ones, when the close season came along, to send their vessels out before the law was up. Mr. Whidden would have but one vessel south; the rest would go to the banks, and would not get any mackerel until about the last of June or first of July. Mr. Smith sent some of his vessels to the south and some to the banks; and he was also buying mackerel.

Doing away with the purse seines would do away with about \$2,000 expenses each year, and I would say, go back to the old times if I thought it better in other ways, but in my opinion it pays better

to use the purse seine.

The squid are a great enemy to the mackerel, and so are dog-fish and blue-fish. Blue-fish are the worst enemy they have in the sea, but they do not go down east. Last summer they were known to be down in the Bay of Fundy; that is the farthest east that I ever knew blue-fish to be.

#### NAMES OF OTHER FISHERMEN.

(Eben Lewis lives in Booth Bay, Me. He never goes fishing in the winter; could see him at Booth Bay. Also Capt. McCowan and John Seavy, Booth bay. They would be likely to be there during the winter until March. At Vinal Haven there is James Crockett; he is about the principal one there.